

CONGRESSMAN DOUG LAMBORN

State of the Fifth Speech

(as prepared remarks delivered February 20, 2018, Colorado Springs, CO)

Thank-you for your very warm welcome and, **Dirk**, thank-you for that wonderful introduction.

I thank all of you for being here today to celebrate this amazing Congressional district. I'm **incredibly honored** to represent you and the Pikes Peak region in Congress.

I'm so excited about the good things happening in the Fifth Congressional District. I'm happy to share important efforts moving our district forward. Although I spend much of my time working on legislation and voting in Washington, I'm always eager to return home to Colorado every chance I get. This is where my roots are planted and I want nothing more than the well-being of our community and neighbors.

Please help me welcome my honored guest, Guatemalan Ambassador to the United States, Manuel Espina.

Last December, President Trump courageously made good on his campaign promise to recognize Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel. Even though there was a backlash in the U.N., and a vote to condemn the U.S. for this move, President Jimmy Morales of Guatemala bravely supported us. Ambassador Espina, thank you for coming today and standing shoulder to shoulder with the United States.

Guatemala has been an important partner for America in other ways, such as stopping foreign nationals fighting for ISIS, working together in the fight against drug trafficking, and also being a major trade partner. I look forward to continuing our important partnership with Guatemala.

The Pikes Peak region seems an unlikely place for international activity. But, the Fifth Congressional District is quite active internationally. We are here at the doorstep of the Fourth Infantry Division -- now preparing for their spring deployment to Afghanistan; under the worldwide GPS and missile defense umbrellas of Schriever Air Force Base; among graduates of our Air Force Academy who deploy all over the globe; not to mention U.S. NORTHCOM, Air Force Space Command, and the Army Space and Missile Center at Peterson; ...**naming only a few** of the critical missions to protect the homeland and watch, warn, and respond to needs around the world.

In December I stood next to Speaker Paul Ryan as he signed the National Defense Authorization Act. The entire House Armed Services committee, plus we who were bill conferees, worked hard on the future of our national security strategy and on enhancing military capabilities. A strong and determined focus on national security in space and cyberspace is crucial and worth the necessary investment.

Most importantly, the new defense budget means a two-year elimination of defense sequestration and a raised budget cap to 700 billion dollars, with 716 billion dollars next fiscal year. The final result strengthened our nation as a whole, but there are immediate and positive effects on our district:

- **The NDAA has given new authority and importance to Air Force Space Command** as part of a broader space reform elevate the priority of space warfighting. The Space warfighting role that was in California has moved to Colorado Springs under Gen Raymond at Air Force Space Command. I'm so pleased to see these important changes.
- There is **an increase to overall space funding of \$1.9 Billion** and an overall increase to \$4.4 Billion for missile defense.
- The **NDAA also quadruples funding from \$30 million to \$120 million for the National Space Defense Center,** a vital national security effort with a staff of

230 operating twenty-four seven at Schreiver Air Force Base, to defend the nation from increasing threats in space.

This center is quickly bringing additional prominence to the Pikes Peak region from many senior administration and military, and, for the first time, intelligence community officials. Just this month, the Deputy Secretary of Defense visited the NSDC. I worked hard even before it was stood up to secure proper funding for the NSCC and am very happy to see it coming to fruition.

At a time when countries like North Korea and Iran are attempting to showcase their missile development, missions at Schriever are more important than ever. In fact, this past year, our very own **100th Missile Defense Brigade** successfully shot down an inbound **test-missile** – an ICBM-class target – sending a clear message to North Korea and others who would do us harm.

This NDAA also adds soldiers to the Army, funds Stryker vehicle upgrades, and accelerates modernization for Armored Brigade Combat Teams. It **includes \$90.5 million for local military construction.** These will have big impact on the Fifth Congressional District.

This NDAA **also provides** our service members a 2.4 percent pay raise— that's **the largest** in eight years. Our men and women in uniform deserve that.

...An those are just the highlights of the NDAA. There are many more wins for the region and the country.

Our district, and Colorado Springs in particular, was just named the most attractive city millennials in the nation. Time and again, we hear why: people visit to play, and they stay to live. This speaks incredibly well of our rich tourism industry in our **amazing mountain communities**.

I'm happy to report that my bill allowing for the enlargement of the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument in nearby Teller County has passed out of the Natural Resources Committee. This gem of an attraction will be an even more inviting destination for recreation and education as a result.

Our region is also attractive to millennials and everyone else for the positive economic growth we are experiencing. Supporting that growth, now and for many years to come, is the far-reaching impact of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that passed in December and which I fought for. President Trump invited Congress to the White House to celebrate its passage. Standing with the president and my

colleagues on the East Lawn was remarkable because the tax code hadn't been reformed since President Reagan's 1986 initiative. By now you may have noticed less taxes coming out of your monthly paycheck and more money in your pocket. When you file taxes next year, it'll be as simple as dropping a postcard in the mail.

Companies big and small, including Walmart—the largest private-sector employer in the United States—have also announced plans because of the tax cut to expand employee benefits, like 401k matching and maternity leave. Some businesses have reversed previous plans to leave the United States. Even utility companies are passing on tax savings to consumers. These benefits are for everybody, not just “the rich.”

Along with hundreds of national businesses, the Bank of Colorado and the National Bank Holdings Corp are handing out large bonuses to their employees. The President of Bank of Colorado, Shawn Osthoff, said in a letter to me, “We feel strongly that the message should be loud and clear that this tax cut will benefit all Americans.”

Also included in the tax bill is legislation that I have championed: **The Craft Beverage Modernization and Tax Reform Act**, to provide Colorado's \$3 Billion brewery industry with relief from high federal excise taxes. This will allow our more than 320 local breweries to reinvest in their businesses, expand their operations, and hire more American workers, all of which contribute to economic and tourism growth across Colorado. With that, I recognize a familiar faces of this great industry: **Todd Baldwin**, owner of Red Leg Brewing, and U.S. Army Veteran of the artillery.

There are many more benefits to the Tax Acts and Jobs Act. This is historic tax reform –I'm excited for what this does for our families, our employers and the tourism and growth it is bringing - **and will continue to bring** - to the district.

Regional economic development is also bolstered by our district's leadership in securing the cyber domain. Today, there are more than eighty cybersecurity employers, including five designated as workforce training organizations in the district.

Founded by my good friend, Kevin O'Neil, Catalyst Campus is a **"collaboratory"** where innovative small business collaborates with government to discover,

develop, and rapidly prototype solutions to military space and cyber problems. It partners with CyberWorx, a joint effort with the Air Force Academy, to bring ingenuity to cyber security. This opened the doors to fifty industry and academic organizations in its first year alone.

This year's NDAA includes support for multi-use secure facilities—a SCIFs – like the one being built on the Catalyst Campus, which is critical to DoD's need to leverage innovative small businesses.

The problem was that small business which could not afford to build, or which did not have access to, a SCIF, were prevented from working on classified projects as defense contractors. We worked with the Department of Defense to solve this problem and we have a solution in the NDAA.

Another example of problem solving when people collaborate is addressing the source of elevated levels of water contaminants: **Pee-Foss** and **Pee-Fo-a**.

Immediately, once these were verified in a **water source** for Widefield, Security and Fountain, I began working with Fountain Mayor Gabriel Ortega, Fountain Water Manager Curtis Mitchell, Widefield Water Manager Brandon Bernard,

Security Water Manager Roy Heald, and the leadership at the Twenty-First Space Wing at Peterson Air Force Base.

I brought these community leaders to Washington for a meeting with senior Pentagon officials. That meeting prioritized our district for Pentagon action and energized the Air Force's Civil Engineer Center to draft memorandums of understanding and to initiate contracts for large-scale water filter systems into these three communities. On the legislative side, I worked hard to boost remediation funding by 72 million dollars.

Working together, we went from source identification to funding remediation within a single legislative year. Things rarely move that fast in Washington but we proved that close partnerships and a spirited level of collaboration can achieve what otherwise seems daunting. While our journey is not over, we will keep moving forward as a community together.

Another hot issue of growing concern is the I-25 gap between Castle Rock and Monument. This two-lane stretch constricts the lifeblood of regional commerce and tourism to the entire district.

While applicants all over the country are competing vigorously to secure very limited federal dollars, and we are in that mix, we might have an opportunity to streamline the federal permitting process as a new Trump Administration infrastructure bill takes shape. The subcommittee I chair in Natural Resources Committee, Water Power and Oceans will have direct input into that package.

And speaking of construction projects....

TODAY, construction is underway, and a dedication ceremony is being planned for construction of a new national veteran's cemetery in El Paso County. The **very first Director of the Pikes Peak National Cemetery has already been appointed and is here today**. Please help me welcome my guest, Mr. Paul LaGrange.

The Pikes Peak National Cemetery represents a promise I made eleven years ago and have now delivered to our veterans and their families. This cemetery is a permanent monument to their courage and sacrifice for the freedoms we hold dear. Funding is secure at 31.8 million dollars. The Pikes peak national Cemetery will open for initial internments by October of this year, even as construction continues.

Establishing a national veteran's cemetery in the Pikes Peak region has been a high-priority for me since my **SECOND DAY** in Congress; this legislative accomplishment is one of the proudest of my career.

Anyone who has had the opportunity to help a veteran knows the honor is in giving back to them. The Pikes Peak National Cemetery will be built facing America's mountain and will reflect the highest sense of dignity for those who served and died for this great country. Paul, thank you for the expertise and experience you bring from the National Veterans Administration and for all you are about to do!

Here in the Fifth District we honor the legacy of veterans in many ways. Our district is home to one of the finest aviation museums in the nation.

With the passing of the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act and President Trump signing it into law, our National Museum of World War II Aviation is now officially the country's premier museum for World War II aviation. Because of various roadblocks, my effort to do this took several years. But this new designation brings new meaning and prestige to our community. Tourism will increase and open up new opportunities for museum development.

Whenever I tell people that Colorado's Fifth District is home to the highest number of veterans of any other congressional district in the nation, they are always surprised. But, it's true.. ...And the **Pikes Peak region** is home **to eighty percent of Colorado's veterans.**

When it comes to VA benefits, many veterans would prefer more options and freedom in choosing their healthcare – **an option they truly do not have today.**

That's why I introduced the Veterans Empowerment Act. It will give veterans the liberty to choose their healthcare providers.

To be clear: this legislation leaves the current VA medical system intact as an option for veterans. In practice, the Veteran's Empowerment Act gives a veteran the freedom -- the true choice -- to decide on their own to receive care in VA facilities or from civilian physicians. **It takes the decision away from a bureaucracy and gives it solely to the veteran.**

Another way I've honored the legacy of our veterans this year is by successfully carrying the Taylor Force Act from introducing the legislation to getting it passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. This legislation is named for U.S. Army veteran Taylor Force, who was an Eagle Scout, a West point graduate, and an Iraq

and Afghanistan veteran. He was brutally murdered by a Palestinian terrorist during an educational tour in Israel in March of 2016.

It's hard to believe, but Palestinian Authority law requires their government to financially reward terrorists and families of deceased terrorists for such attack, to the tune of 315 million dollars each year.

The Taylor Force Act would withhold our assistance to the Palestinian Authority until they stop this horrific practice of incentivizing murder. This legislation is so important because it is unacceptable that hard-earned U.S. tax dollars are going to support an entity that rewards terrorism, like the terror attack that murdered Taylor Force.

In addition to honoring veterans who have put their lives on the line, we must remember our brave law enforcement officers. We were all stunned by the recent killing of Sheriff's Deputy Micah Flick. As his widow, Rachel, so eloquently put stated at his funeral, "We have a cultural epidemic of a lack of respect for law enforcement and authority." Unfortunately, we also see this in the epidemic of drug abuse, both opioids and marijuana. I plan to partner with responsible leaders in our community, like Sheriff Bill Elder, District Attorney Dan May, and Mayor

John Suthers, to fight the scourge of illegal drugs, especially when cartels are involved who move large quantities of marijuana across state lines.

Here in this district, despite the many good things happening, we have to constantly be on guard to fight against the cultural and criminal elements that would take us in the wrong direction.

One way I try to help in Congress is by promoting a culture of respect for life. I believe all people are made in the image of God and are deserving of protection, including those not yet born. Because of this, I've worked on legislation in Washington and in Colorado to protect the unborn from the inhumane practice of the harvesting of body parts for research. I've also fought to protect taxpayers from the burden of funding other people's elective abortions, in the U.S. and around the world.

Mothers facing unexpected pregnancies need community support, and that's why centers like Life Network exist. Please welcome my friend, Life Network CEO Rich Bennett. Rich and his team work tirelessly to protect and care for women and babies through foster families, adoption, and life-changing options.

People may not realize that I can help finalize international adoptions by cutting through bureaucratic red tape. In one instance a few years ago, I personally called the U.S. Embassy in Uganda that was unjustifiably withholding a visa for the adopted daughter of one of my constituents. Out of excuses, the embassy staff then promptly granted the visa.

I'm pleased to have on my staff a well-known pastor of twenty-five years from our community. Pastor Jeff Anderson is a Southern Colorado native, longtime member of the Grace Bible Church staff, and president of the International Bible Conference. His outreach efforts into the multi-faith community of our district allow me to partner and keep up with the most current issues and events.

Fortunately, although problems still crop up, religious freedoms are largely being respected again under the Trump Administration.

Vice President Mike Pence and many others who have been appointed to the Trump administration are key allies with me in this and so many other ways. I work hard to promote a strong working relationship between myself and my constituents and the White House. I will do everything I can to make the Fifth Congressional District as great as it can possibly be.

As we close today, I'd like to convey again the excitement currently in

Washington. It feels like a new day. I have a strong feeling of partnership with this administration. Government agencies are doing their jobs for the American people. Good things are happening nationally, and good things are happening here at home. Much of what happens in Congress is not the bluster and confrontation we often see on television, but people rolling up their sleeves to solve problems for the American people. It's truly an honor for me to both advance the Fifth Congressional District and to serve the United States of America. Thank-you for your time today, and your interest and support in moving the district forward. God Bless our Fifth Congressional District, and God Bless America.